

TWENTY-THIRD ANNUAL REPORT

OF THE

TRUSTEES

OF THE

NEW YORK ASYLUM FOR IDIOTS

OF THE

STATE OF NEW YORK.

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TRANSMITTED TO THE LEGISLATURE JANUARY 15, 1874.

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1874.



## TRUSTEES.

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JAMES H. TITUS,	FRANKLIN TOWNSEND,
HENRY N. POHLMAN,	LYMAN CLARY,
ALLEN MUNROE,	E. W. LEAVENWORTH,
GEORGE F. COMSTOCK,	LAKE I. TEFFT.

### STATE OFFICERS — EX-OFFICIO TRUSTEES:

JOHN A. DIX, *Governor.*

JOHN C. ROBINSON, *Lieutenant-Governor.*

DIEDRICH WILLERS, JR., *Secretary of State.*

NELSON K. HOPKINS, *Comptroller.*

A. B. WEAVER, *Sup't of Public Instruction.*

### PERMANENT CHAIRMAN:

HENRY N. POHLMAN.

### SECRETARY AND TREASURER:

ALLEN MUNROE.

### EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE:

E. W. LEAVENWORTH,	JAMES H. TITUS,
	LYMAN CLARY.

# OFFICERS.

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SUPERINTENDENT:

HERVEY B. WILBUR, M. D.

MATRON:

MISS ALVIRA WOOD.

ASSISTANT MATRON:

MRS. F. A. HARDY.

HOUSEKEEPER:

MRS. SUSAN E. LOESCHER.

TEACHERS:

MISS S. P. YOUNG,

MRS. M. E. COOK,

MISS E. PETHERAM,

MISS L. E. KNIGHT,

MISS L. PETHERAM.

STEWARD:

MR. WILLIAM H. WOOD.

# STATE OF NEW YORK.

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No. 13.

## IN ASSEMBLY,

January 15, 1874.

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### TWENTY-THIRD ANNUAL REPORT OF THE TRUSTEES OF THE NEW YORK ASYLUM FOR IDIOTS.

*To the Legislature of the State of New York:*

Agreeably to the provisions of the act establishing this institution, the undersigned, trustees, respectfully submit this their twenty-third annual report.

The total cash receipts for the year ending September 30, 1873, as will be seen by the treasurer's report, herewith annexed, were as follows:

#### RECEIPTS.

Cash from state treasurer (annual appropriation).....	\$32,000 00
Cash from state treasurer (special appropriation).....	6,000 00
County treasurers, for clothing state pupils.....	2,718 10
Individuals, for instruction and clothing state pupils.	5,331 44
Balance due by superintendent, October 1, 1872.....	241 47
Overdraft at bank, October 1, 1873.....	1,017 11
Due superintendent, October 1, 1873.....	23 25

Total.....	<u>\$47,331 37</u>
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#### EXPENDITURES FOR SAME PERIOD.

Provisions and household supplies.....	\$12,192 04
Salaries .....	6,555 00
Wages and labor.....	5,987 16

Carried forward.....	<u>\$24,734 20</u>
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Brought forward.....	\$24,734 20
Fuel.....	3,164 25
Gas.....	979 71
Farm and stable.....	1,050 08
Furniture and furnishing articles, household linen, etc.	1,760 55
Clothing .....	2,695 51
Books, stationery, school furniture and apparatus....	296 72
Rent of land and taxes.....	460 36
Discount .....	82 11
Drugs and medicine.....	159 07
Repairs to buildings.....	1,343 12
Postage .....	62 61
Printing.....	42 50
Water.....	300 00
Express freight and telegraph.....	52 65
Traveling expenses of trustees.....	38 25
Traveling expenses of superintendent.....	48 45
Funeral expenses of pupils.....	56 72
Money to boys.....	13 30
Sundries.....	17 43
Construction account.....	8,187 11
Cemetery lot.....	891 63
Overdraft at bank, October 1, 1872.....	651 99
Total.....	<u>\$47,331 37</u>

From the above statements it will be seen, that there was an overdraft at the bank, October 1st, 1873, amounting to.....

At the same date there were outstanding bills for supplies .....

Salaries for quarter ending Sept. 30th, 1873.....

\$1,017 11

2,374 97

1,487 50

\$4,879 58

#### CASH ASSETS OF THE ASYLUM OCT. 1, 1873

Due from individuals for board, instruction and clothing of pupils.....

Advances for coal for coming year.....

\$2,135 94

1,500 00

\$3,635 94

This apparent deficiency of assets, as compared with liabilities, amounting to some twelve hundred dollars, is offset by supplies of various kinds on hand, available for use during the present fiscal year.

The special appropriation of \$6,000 was used in completing and furnishing the building erected last year, and in making some changes in the old buildings, made necessary by the increasing number of pupils.

The expense of maintenance and instruction of the pupils, including all bills of every kind, except for clothing and construction account, are about \$205 per pupil. This sum, in the opinion of the board, may be taken as a safe basis for estimating the future expenditures of the asylum.

It will be seen by the report of the superintendent, that there has been an unusual mortality among the pupils during the past year. This has resulted, however, the trustees are happy to state, from no prevailing diseases, to be imputed to defect in the sanitary arrangements of the asylum, or from any local causes, but, in most cases, to causes of disease existing in the constitutions of the pupils before coming to the asylum.


Each succeeding year, in the experience of the institution, confirms the opinion of the trustees, that, with its present organization and present capacity and arrangement of buildings, only cases of a teachable condition should be admitted. And when, through any misunderstanding, any pupils have been admitted who are incapable of proper training and instruction, from sickness or other cause, that these shall be dismissed after a fair trial, as our by-laws now indicate.

In 1861, when additional land was purchased by the board for the use of the asylum, there remained, after exhausting the purchase-money appropriated by the legislature for the purpose, a corner lot of some five acres, lying between the grounds of the institution and the public road. The privilege of purchasing this lot at \$1,500 (or about \$300 an acre) was reserved by the trustees for a term of years. The time has now come when the lot should either be purchased or relinquished, and the trustees would therefore ask for the necessary authority to purchase the same.

With the present increased capacity of the asylum, it would seem proper that the state appropriation for the support of state pupils should be now increased, and the board would therefore recommend that the annual appropriation be raised from \$32,000 to \$36,000.

The trustees continue to feel the same confidence in the success of the institution that they have expressed in former reports, and they would now again commend it to the good will and the favorable action of the legislature.

JAMES H. TITUS,	}	<i>Trustees.</i>
FRANKLIN TOWNSEND,		
HENRY N. POHLMAN,		
LAKE I. TEFFT,		
E. W. LEAVENWORTH,		
LYMAN CLARY,		
ALLEN MUNROE,		
GEORGE F. COMSTOCK,		
ABRAM B. WEAVER,		
<i>Superintendent Public Instruction.</i>		
N. K. HOPKINS, <i>Comptroller.</i>		
DIEDRICH WILLERS, JR.,		
<i>Secretary of State.</i>		



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## SUPERINTENDENT'S REPORT.

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*To the Trustees of the New York Asylum for Idiots:*

GENTLEMEN — I herewith submit a report of the affairs of the institution for the year ending October 1, 1873.

The whole number of pupils connected with the asylum during that year was 186. The average daily number of pupils was 178. Of this number, 154 were supported entirely from the state appropriation. The remainder were paying pupils, either in full or in part of the actual cost of their maintenance. The state pupils are admitted free of charge, on application signed by the parent or next friend. This application is indorsed by two other parties acquainted with the applicant and the circumstance of the case, who make an affidavit before the county judge, whose certificate is then attached to the application. In a few cases parties have been received on a direct application of the county superintendent of the poor, who could certify to the residence and indigence of the pupils whose admission was desired.

The actual cost of board and instruction of each of the average number of pupils in attendance was \$205.

The general health of the pupils has been good, with the exception of an epidemic of measles, that prevailed during the summer, and yet an unusual number of deaths have occurred among the inmates during the past year. Several circumstances have conspired to produce this result. In the first place, in the increase of our number of pupils that took place at the beginning of the last school year, there was more than the usual proportion of feeble or diseased cases. In fact, some were hospital subjects from the start. Then there were two or three of those who died who had been in a decline for some time, and known to be affected with fatal disease, who yet had no proper homes, and therefore had been allowed to remain to die in the institution.

Of the nine deaths that occurred, five were from consumption; of the remaining four, one died of erysipelas, one of pneumonia, one of congestion of the lungs, and the fourth from spinal disease of long standing. From the very nature of idiocy, the mortality that occurs will doubtless be, in the main, from causes like those enumerated above. There is a radical defect of physical constitution that makes all diseases that occur, or all critical periods of life, doubly perilous to the idiot. There are hereditary vices of constitution that are ready to develop into positively fatal cases, whenever exciting causes of any kind present themselves.

Besides a bare enumeration of the statistics of the institution, it has been my practice, in my annual reports to the board, to discuss

certain questions relating to the general subject. I have thus spoken of the general results that have followed the efforts adopted to train and educate the class for whose benefit the institution was founded. At times I have given a description of individual cases that illustrated the degree of improvements made in such typical cases. In so doing, I have always aimed to present the results in such a form as not to lay myself open to the charge of over-statements, or of over-estimating the value of the work in which I have been engaged.

In other reports, I have given an outline of the principles and methods of instruction by which the results named have been attained. I have also mentioned some of the evidences of satisfaction with the improvements made in the pupils, afforded us by the parents of those submitted to the care of the institution. I have made incidental mention of the spread and growth of similar institutions in this country and Europe.

That such institutions as ours meet a public need is now generally recognized by all those who have made a study of the relations of society to the dependent classes. This, in a measure, relieves those directly connected with them from reiterating every year a special plea in their behalf.

It may be enough to say, for the present, that the institution has continued to minister, in its peculiar way, to the great relief of many families throughout the state. In no instance within the knowledge of the officers has any dissatisfaction been expressed with the results attained, or with the mode of treatment and management pursued in the institution. On the contrary, there has seemed to be a very grateful appreciation of the work it has been doing, by all most interested.

In fact, a large portion of the new applications for admission each year come from localities or neighborhoods from which former pupils have been received. This is one evidence, certainly, that the progress of the pupils has been satisfactory, and that the management of the institution has inspired a general confidence.

As is well known, during the last few years, boards of state charities have been established in several of the states, whose function is the supervision of existing charitable institutions and the investigation and discussion of plans for the welfare of the dependent classes, in accordance with the demands of a wise political economy.

So far as I am aware, such boards of charity have uniformly indorsed, in the most cordial manner, the general object and purpose of institutions like our own, and have, also, certified to their practical success. In fact, through the recommendation of such boards, measures are now being taken to establish asylums of a similar character in several states, as yet without them.

The history of the efforts for the amelioration of the condition of idiots in Great Britain furnishes, perhaps, the best evidence of the value of institutions for that purpose that can be offered.

Starting in a small way, less than twenty-five years ago, or about the same time as in this country, they have gone on increasing in



number and in public confidence, until there are now four or five large public establishments besides several of a minor character. This has been accomplished through several causes. Thus no object could well appeal more strongly to the public reason and public sympathy. And so the wealthy classes have responded in the most liberal manner by the endowment and support of the several asylums. The commissioners of lunacy, and those especially connected with the management of insane asylums, have been liberal in their terms of commendation of the general purpose and successful management of asylums for idiots.

And, in this connection, what may be regarded as an instructive fact may be mentioned. The first class of institutions for idiots in England were like our own; that is to say, mainly educational in their scope and aim. But later, there have grown special asylums for the care and custody of adult and untractable cases, and these last as a part of their system of public support for the dependent classes. For it is assumed that it costs no more thus to provide for the class in question, by themselves and in buildings constructed with special reference to their needs, than when herded together with the general mass of pauperism in the county alms-houses.

It is to be hoped that the time is not far distant when a similar advance may be made in this country; when every human being, to whom the full gift of reason has been denied, may be cared for in accordance with the highest dictates of humanity.

Since our last report was issued, we have occupied our new building, which has added much to the convenience of the management and the comfort of the inmates.

The entire construction and furniture account has been closed by the payment of the last bill. Nothing has been designedly expended for mere show, and while we can point to buildings that are in every way adapted for the purpose for which they were planned, the cost has been within the reasonable expectations of all interested.

At some future day, with the increase of applications for admission, it may be desirable to add another wing of moderate size to increase the convenience of classification.

I am happy to record the continued harmony that has existed among those engaged in every department of the institution, and the fidelity manifested by my assistants of every kind.

H. B. WILBUR,  
*Superintendent.*

SYRACUSE, *January 10, 1873.*





## TREASURER'S REPORT.

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ALLEN MUNROE, treasurer of the New York Asylum for Idiots, in account current with the state of New York, for cash received and expended for the general supplies and the salaries and wages of officers, teachers, attendants and servants of said asylum, during the year ending September 30, 1873:

1872.	<i>Dr.</i>	
Oct. 8.	To cash from state treasurer.....	\$8,000 00
1873.		
Jan. 3.	To cash from state treasurer.....	8,000 00
Mar. 29.	To cash from state treasurer.....	8,000 00
June 30.	To cash from state treasurer.....	8,000 00
Aug. 18.	To cash from state treasurer (special appropriation).....	6,000 00
Mar.	To cash from county treasurers for clothing state pupils.....	2,718 10
	To cash from paying pupils, for board and clothing.....	5,331 44
	To cash from superintendent, moneys in his hand Oct. 1, 1872.....	241 47
Oct. 1.	Due superintendent on contingent account..	23 25
Oct. 1.	Overdraft at bank.....	1,117 11
		\$47,331 37

1872.	<i>Cr.</i>	
Oct. 1.	By overdraft.....	\$651 99
1873.		
Jan. 1.	By cash paid on warrants of executive committee for quarter ending Dec. 31, 1872..	7,179 87
April 1.	By cash, etc., for quarter ending March 31, 1873.....	13,620 07
July 1.	By cash paid on warrants of executive committee for quarter ending June 30.....	8,901 56
Sept. 30.	By cash paid on warrants of executive committee for quarter ending Sept. 30, 1873..	9,381 70
Sept. 30.	Sundry bills paid by superintendent and steward and audited by executive committee .....	5,596 16
		\$47,331 37

## APPENDIX.

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### EXTRACT FROM THE BY-LAWS OF THE ASYLUM.

“The design and objects of the asylum, as established by the action of the legislature, are not of a custodial character, but to furnish the means of education to that portion of the youth of the state not provided for in any of its other educational institutions. Those only will, therefore, be received into the asylum who are of a proper school-attending age, and for such periods of time as shall, in the estimation of the board of trustees, suffice to impart all the education practicable in each particular case, and in conformity with the regulations hereinafter specified.

“Children between the ages of 7 and 14, who are idiotic, or so deficient in intelligence as to be incapable of being educated at any ordinary school, and who are not epileptic, insane or greatly deformed, may be admitted by the superintendent, with the advice and consent of the executive committee. Applications in behalf of others shall be referred to the action of the board of trustees.

“The parents or next friends of those in whose behalf applications are made for admission as pupils shall make answers in writing to such questions as the superintendent and committee shall prescribe. They shall, moreover, if of sufficient ability, engage to pay such reasonable sum for the education and support of the pupils, and to furnish them with such proper clothing while in the institution, as shall be stipulated by the superintendent, and they shall in all cases be bound to receive them back, when required, free of expense to the asylum. But no idiots shall be received into the asylum without there shall have been first lodged with the superintendent thereof a request to that effect, under the hand of the person by whose direction he is sent, stating the age and place of nativity, if known, of the idiot, his christian and surname, the town or city and county in which they severally reside, the ability, or otherwise, of the idiot, his parents or guardians, to provide for his support, in whole or in part; and if in part only, what part and degree of relationship, or other circumstances or connection between him and the person requesting his admission; which statement shall be verified in writing by the oath of two disinterested persons, residents of the same county with the idiot, acquainted with the facts and circumstances so stated, and certified to be credible by the county judge of the same county. And no idiot shall be received into said asylum unless the county judge of the county liable for his



support shall certify that such idiot is an eligible and proper candidate for admission to said asylum as aforesaid.

“The state pupils in the asylum will be selected in equal numbers, as far as may be, from each judicial district, from those whose parents or guardians are unable to provide for their support therein.

“The state pupils will be expected to come to the asylum provided with a supply of neat and substantial clothing for the first six months, after which period the clothing will be furnished by the asylum, at the expense of the respective counties of which they are residents, as in the case of the deaf and dumb, and the blind asylums of the state.

“A bond will be required in all cases, except the case of a state pupil, to insure the removal of the pupil free of expense to the institution.

“All pupils will be received upon trial for one month, at the end of which time a report upon the case will be made to the parents or parties sending them.

“The education furnished by the institution will include, not only the simpler elements of instruction usually taught in common schools, where that is practicable, but will embrace a course of training in the more practical matters of every-day life, the cultivation of habits of decency, propriety, self-management and self-reliance, and the development and enlargement of a capacity for useful occupation.

“There shall be a vacation during the whole month of August, unless otherwise directed by the board, at which period all pupils must be removed from the asylum by the parents or guardians, if required by the superintendent.

“Applications for admission to the asylum, stating age, sex, general health, and such other particulars as will enable the trustees to judge of the teachableness of the person for whom application is made, must be directed to the superintendent, Dr. H. B. Wilbur.”

It will be seen by reference to the foregoing, just what the mode of admission is. Application is first made to the superintendent of the asylum, furnishing such particulars of the condition of the person for whom application is made as will enable the executive committee to decide whether the party is a suitable subject for admission.

If the case come within the purpose of the institution, a blank form of application is at once sent, which, when filled up and returned to the superintendent, furnishes a statement of the name, residence, etc., of the party, and his or her pecuniary condition, or the pecuniary condition of his or her parents, verified by the affidavit of two persons acquainted with the circumstances related in the statement, and confirmed by the certificate of the county judge.

On the return of this circular, if there is a vacancy from the judicial district in which the party resides, permission is at once given for his or her admission.

If no vacancy exists at the time, the parties interested are so notified, and the application is filed, the applicant to receive the benefit of the first vacancy, in turn.

It is provided in the by-laws that each pupil shall be taken on trial. The probationary period named is one month. The practice has been otherwise. The cases rejected on trial have usually been retained a much longer period; at all events, till it was certain they were not suitable subjects for improvement.

The grounds upon which pupils have been dismissed under the rule hitherto have been, first, serious ill health that seemed likely to terminate in a speedy death. In most of the cases included under this head, the wisdom of the decision requiring their removal has been verified by the fact that they died not many months afterward. Next, confirmed epilepsy. When this disease has been fully developed, the same reasons that suggested the article in the by-laws against the admission of epileptics would require their dismissal.

Again, true dementia, or a loss of mind resulting from organic lesion of the brain, as a consequence of some disease in infancy or childhood.

Again, cases of idiocy conjoined with insanity. In these, the very measures of management and instruction adopted in the case of idiocy, only excite and aggravate the peculiarities presented; and as there is no proper provision in this institution for confinement, seclusion or restraint, their dismissal is rendered unavoidable.

In a few cases only it could be said that all efforts to educate or radically improve, that the asylum afforded, had failed of their purpose.